

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-58. Canceled

59. (New) An apparatus for printing a multicolor composite image formed from at least two component images on a plurality of shaped pharmaceutical pieces each having at least one non-planar surface, said apparatus comprising:

a first print station effective to print a first component image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a first print position;

a second print station effective to print a subsequent second component image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a second print position; and

a transport surface to move said shaped pharmaceutical pieces from said first print position to said second print position, wherein said transport surface includes a plurality of transport recess portions,

wherein each of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces is removably positioned in a predetermined location temporarily fixed within a respective one of said transport recess portions at least between the first and second print positions, to thereby maintain registration of said first component image relative to said second component image so as to enable said multicolor composite image to be formed.

60. (New) The apparatus of claim 59, wherein said transport recess portions are configured to position the non-planar surface of said pieces above said transporting surface.

61. (New) The apparatus of claim 59, further including a retaining plate to move cooperatively with said transport surface to fix said shaped pharmaceutical pieces in said transport recess portions.

62. (New) The apparatus of claim 59, wherein each of said transport recess portions includes an opening through which a retaining member extends to fix said shaped pharmaceutical pieces in said transport recess portions.

63. (New) The apparatus of claim 59, wherein each of said transport recess portions includes a resilient portion, and a retaining member urges said pieces against said resilient portions.

64. (New) The apparatus of claim 59, further comprising a plurality of retaining members each including a resilient portion configured to temporarily and selectively fix the shaped pharmaceutical pieces in the predetermined location.

65. (New) The apparatus of claim 59, wherein said shaped pharmaceutical piece is one of a pharmaceutical capsule, tablet or caplet.

66. (New) The apparatus of claim 59, wherein each of said transport recess portions includes a hole in communication with a vacuum source, to maintain the shaped pharmaceutical pieces in the predetermined location.

67. (New) The apparatus of claim 66, wherein the vacuum source is configured to apply a first vacuum pressure in the vicinity of at least one of the first and second print positions, and a second pressure, lower than the first vacuum pressure, between the first and second print stations.

68. (New) The apparatus of claim 59, wherein the first and second print stations are ink jet printers configured to serially apply the first and second component images to the shaped pharmaceutical pieces.

69. (New) The apparatus of claim 59, wherein registration between the first and second print positions for each of the shaped pharmaceutical pieces is maintained at better than or equal to 0.40 mm.

70. (New) The apparatus of claim 69, wherein said registration is better than or equal to 0.25mm.

71. (New) The apparatus of claim 70, wherein said registration is better than or equal to 0.05mm.

72. (New) The apparatus of claim 59, wherein said transport surface is configured to have a production rate of at least 1,000 shaped pharmaceutical pieces per hour.

73. (New) The apparatus of claim 72, wherein said transport surface is configured to have a production rate of at least 10,000 shaped pharmaceutical pieces per hour.

74. (New) The apparatus of claim 73, wherein said transport surface is configured to have a production rate of at least 50,000 shaped pharmaceutical pieces per hour.

75. (New) The apparatus of claim 59, wherein said shaped pharmaceutical pieces are prevented from skewing and yawing within the transport recess portions.

76. (New) A method for printing a multicolor composite image formed from at least two component images on a plurality of shaped pharmaceutical pieces each having at least one non-planar surface, said method comprising:

printing a first component image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a first print position;

printing a subsequent second component image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a second print position;

moving a transport surface including said shaped pharmaceutical pieces from said first print position to said second print position, wherein said transport surface includes a plurality of transport recess portions; and

positioning said shaped pharmaceutical pieces in a predetermined location temporarily fixed within a respective one of said transport recess portions at least between the first and second print positions, to thereby maintain registration of said first component image relative to said second component image so as to enable said multicolor composite image to be formed.

77. (New) The method of claim 76, wherein positioning of the shaped pharmaceutical pieces includes positioning the shaped pharmaceutical pieces in the transport recess portions such that the non-planar portion of each of the shaped pharmaceutical pieces protrudes above the transport surface.

78. (New) The method of claim 76, further comprising positioning a vacuum hole at a deepest portion of each of the transport recess portions.

79. (New) The method of claim 76, further comprising positioning a vacuum hole on a side wall of each of the transport recess portions.

80. (New) The method of claim 76, further comprising applying a pressure differential to temporarily fix the shaped pharmaceutical pieces in the predetermined location.